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ABSTRACT

Leaders need to be forceful--to assert themselves and push others to action. They must also be enabling--to discover and bring out the capabilities of others. The problem is that many executives see forceful leadership and enabling leadership as mutually exclusive or strongly favor one approach over the other, thus lacking the versatility they need to be effective. This handbook argues that the objective of management development is flexibility--to equip managers to handle a wider variety of situations. The book discusses how the concept of flexibility is played out in senior managers. It describes the emotional basis for executive leadership and the ways in which emotions are engaged when executives try to develop their leadership skills. The consequences of relying too heavily on one approach are also examined, and suggestions are offered for compensating and adapting leadership styles. The primary development task for forceful managers is to develop their trust in others; for enabling managers it is to develop self-confidence. Personal change begins with self-realization, followed by trying new behaviors. Four tables are included. (Contains 19 references.) (LMI)

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CENTER FOR CREATIVE LEADERSHIP

FORCEFUL LEADERSHIP AND ENABLING LEADERSHIP: YOU CAN DO BOTH

Robert E. Kaplan

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Robert E. Kaplan

Center for Creative Leadership
Greensboro, North Carolina

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Preface

In the following report I employ the terms *forceful* and *enabling* because they are quite commonly used in organizations to describe roughly the same managerial characteristics that I ascribe to them. The other reason is that it was important to me for conceptual reasons that both terms have positive connotations.

The word *forceful*, as unremarkable as it is, grew out of years of action-research that I have conducted with executives and my effort to characterize, for them and for me, their basic nature. It occurred to me as I was working with an individual a couple of years ago that he, like so many of his peers, was a "force to be reckoned with." And how did he get himself into trouble? By being too much of a force. I began calling this category of manager *forces*, but the suggestion of the use of force, which an acquaintance kindly pointed out, was not what I wanted to describe the desirable form of this approach to leadership. *Forceful* was better because it did not carry that baggage.

I adopted *enabling* because I heard executives talking about the need to, for example, "enable people to innovate" or "enable the organization to perform at high levels."

A few years ago I wrote about what I termed *the expansive executive* and distinguished between the desirable case and the extreme case (Kaplan, 1990, 1991; Kaplan, Drath, & Kofodimos, 1992). This forerunner of the idea of forceful leadership was much more fully developed at that stage than was the precursor to enabling leadership.

Once this opposition of forceful and enabling leadership crystallized in my mind, I developed with help from my colleagues a draft instrument for measuring it. This report is based on the quantitative data from our early use of this instrument as well as the qualitative data from our service work.

In treating the notion of forceful versus enabling, I do not for a moment regard it as constituting all of leadership. I do, however, think that understanding it is important if we are to improve the effectiveness of leadership as it is practiced today.

Introduction

What is the goal of management development? The obvious answer is: to make managers more effective. But how do we define effectiveness? Everyone—managers and students of management alike—has an opinion, some more informed than others. There is no one way to define leadership effectiveness, but I have found it helpful to think about it broadly as *versatility*. The objective of management development, then, is to help equip managers to handle a wider variety of situations.

To get beyond this general definition I will explore what versatility means in terms of two approaches to leadership that I have found to be prevalent in my work with executives: forceful and enabling.

I am not the first to observe these two approaches. In fact, there is a long-running controversy about which is better. In one camp are people who hold that being enabling, or empowering, is the way to go. Gaining strength since World War II (and expressed in such terms as *participative leadership* and *Theory Y*), this idea of leadership came into great favor in the last ten years as organizations mounted a collective effort to improve quality, innovate, and stay competitive. In the other camp are people who, partly in reaction to the empowerment movement, hold that strong individual leadership is critical, especially when fundamental change is needed.

Which approach is better? Which do we want an individual leader to take, especially the senior leader? The answer, perhaps obvious, is that it is a mistake to choose. Allowing for the fact that any individual will tend to favor or specialize in one or the other, both approaches are required of the senior leader. In the face of the varied and ever-changing demands on managers, especially senior managers, versatility is the name of the game.

Let me emphasize: Versatility is a range of diverse capabilities, not a nondescript, shapeless blend.

Total versatility may not be attainable, at least by most managers. Even if it were attainable, we do not know for certain whether total versatility is synonymous with ultimate effectiveness. Managers who favor one approach over the other may be more effective in certain conditions. My work with executives has convinced me, however, that managers who emphasize one to the point of sacrificing the other put themselves and their organizations at risk.

Managers face a number of obstacles in the pursuit of greater versatility. The root of the word *versatility* means "to turn around" or "to pivot." What limits a person's range of movement, managerially speaking, is the

same thing that stands in his or her way of becoming more versatile. And it is not just lack of skills. It is also attitude. Managers who depend too much on one approach to leadership must overcome negative feelings about the other approach. In extreme cases, a manager can have an aversion to the other. The word *aversion*, with the same root as *versatility*, means literally to "turn away from."

Although the distinction between forceful and enabling leadership is not new, it can, if looked at in the proper way and in the proper context, be surprisingly useful. In this report I will discuss the way the idea actually plays out in senior managers. In doing so, I will inquire into the emotional basis for executive leadership and how emotions are engaged when executives try to develop, or even think about developing.

The Tension Between Forceful and Enabling

In the past, when executives and students of management made the distinction between a forceful and an enabling approach to leadership, their tendency was to oppose the two or to place one at a disadvantage. The widely used terms *autocratic* and *participative*, for example, leave no doubt which is the more desirable.

The same is true of "Theory X" and "Theory Y," as conceptualized by Douglas McGregor (1960). This highly normative dichotomy captured the imagination of academics and practicing managers alike and has had great staying power in the field. What McGregor did brilliantly was expose the fallacious thinking behind heavy-handed leadership. Theory X is a set of assumptions about human nature that holds that the average person doesn't like to work and avoids responsibility, and therefore must be directed and even coerced into getting his or her work done. Hence, forceful leadership is required.

If Theory X sets up a negative self-fulfilling prophecy, Theory Y does the opposite. It assumes that the average person is perfectly willing to work hard and take responsibility if the work is at all interesting and if he or she is treated like an adult and not like a child. The idea is to replace a vicious cycle with a virtuous cycle.

McGregor's model of leadership is a carefully reasoned polemic against overcontrol. He has much company today in people who look askance at what they regard as the traditional command-and-control model of leadership.

There are, however, people who have serious misgivings about empowerment and its de-emphasis on the power of the person in charge. Abraham Zaleznik regards the contemporary preference for empowering leadership as part of the American love affair with fraternal leadership—with leader as brother. In a 1989 book subtitled *Restoring Leadership in Business*, he argued that strong, charismatic leadership is critical to organizational effectiveness, and contended that "personal influence is leadership," as long as it is not self-serving (p. 237). In fact, the democratic ethos that sprang up in U.S. organizations in the 1980s, thanks in part to the quality movement featuring employee involvement and teamwork, seems to have resulted in a backlash by people who feel that decentralization and cooperative processes have been overdone.

I have worked with some executives who feel this way. One such individual, whose company had pushed quality for ten years with considerable success, decried the muffling effects of a strong orientation toward process.

> This company has gotten caught up in the bad, terrible part of process, which implies lack of edge, lack of accountability, lack of consequences, lack of responsibility. And when you focus so much on process, you tend to forget the role of personality and leadership.

Personality to this executive means the sort of aggressive, charismatic leadership that Zaleznik calls for.

To another executive I worked with, leadership means sharp definition.

> This corporation needs people with more of an edge, more of a bite. A whiff of brutal clarity, if it's based on reality, is an essential component of leadership.

This executive is also an advocate of periodic drastic change to maintain a company's competitive position. And,

> if you have a change agenda, you have to overweight the agenda to get it going. You have to overweight it since you're up against inertial tendencies. That's where passionate energy and leadership are required.

To "overweight" is to apply force, to be forceful.

Some are particularly critical of fellow executives who in their view go overboard in the effort to create favorable conditions for their people. One

complained: "This corporation is full of round-worded, nice people who don't make a change." Another characterization I've heard is "go-along." Or "get-along, go-along." What concerns the individuals delivering this critique is that "feel-good" comes at the expense of taking the tough action necessary to make organizations operate effectively, which of course in the long run is no favor to people. In a misguided effort to be good to people, the argument runs, leaders who avoid inflicting pain when it is unavoidable ultimately let people down. As one executive commented, "I don't trust feel-good. When they have to execute, they can't. If you don't deliver, what's it all about?"

Thus, both camps—those that have no faith in an empowering, people-oriented approach, and those who have no use for control-oriented management—tend to discredit and dismiss the other.

In fact, each critique has more than a grain of truth in it. But each attack is valid only when its *target is the other side taken to an extreme*. McGregor was quite right in pointing out that extremely tight control, as a basis for designing jobs and supervising people, leads inevitably to having employees react in ways that seem to justify tight, if not tighter yet, control. And critics on the other side are likewise quite right in attacking power-sharing and high people-consideration when these abdicate the unpleasant parts of the job or fall into unfocused, undisciplined execution. Again, these criticisms are valid as commentaries on the excesses of the other side.

If each set of critics has truth on its side, it is at best a half-truth. What each camp misses is the value of the other approach when it is used effectively. As it stands, each reacts to the other's excesses. Each equates the other with its excesses and in the process misses the things that work. My purpose here is to consider simultaneously what is useful about both approaches to leadership. I will juxtapose the best of what enabling leadership has to offer and the best of what forceful leadership can bring, while remaining mindful of what happens when either type is taken to an extreme.

Forceful Leadership and Enabling Leadership as Opposing Virtues

Even though forceful and enabling are opposites, they are not necessarily incompatible, contradictory, or mutually exclusive. Robert Quinn (1991) understood this when he created a "competing values framework" for defining leadership using such "oppositions" as "a cooperative, team-oriented style" and "a dynamic, competitive style." Carl Jung (1976) juxtaposed

"thinking" and "feeling," recognizing that individuals may prefer one or the other but never suggesting that one precluded the other. Daniel Levinson and his colleagues (see Levinson, 1978) discussed midlife transitions in terms of pairs of personal qualities or conditions such as "masculine-feminine" and "attachment-separateness." They called each of these pairs a "polarity in the sense that the two terms represent opposing tendencies or conditions" (p. 197). Although it might seem "that a person can be one or the other but not both," in fact "both sides of each polarity coexist within every self."

Typically, managers and management experts think of leadership attributes in terms of lists of discrete characteristics. Ask a group of executives, as I have, what their truths—their cherished beliefs—about leading effectively are, and they will generate an impressive list: "Set the bar high," "Hold people accountable," "Listen," "Turn people loose," "Push people hard," "Give them recognition," and so on. If these lists have the quality of commandments ("Thou shalt delegate," "Thou shalt not run roughshod over your subordinates"), then a conceptual step forward may be to define leadership characteristics in terms of opposing or complementary attributes. The idea is that, to be effective, managers must have some degree of capability in both types. This is not a new idea, just a generally unexploited one in the field of leadership as well as social science.

As evidenced from the controversy surrounding them, forceful leadership and enabling leadership can appear contradictory to the fervent partisans of each. When an executive believes that one precludes the other, it is a sure sign that the person lacks versatility. In fact, forceful and enabling can be complementary, which means that they are distinctly different but absolutely necessary to each other. *Complementary* means "to fill or complete." Each approach completes the other. Forceful and enabling are literally "one of two mutually completing parts." They are yin and yang. Together they make up a whole.

Talking and listening, two very different functions, are incomplete without each other. If you do all the talking, you can't be effective; if you do a great job of listening but fail to make your own views known, you won't get the job done. We could argue endlessly about whether talking or listening is more important to the manager's job. We could discredit talking by citing examples of managers who utterly dominate meetings; we could discredit listening by citing examples of managers who are painfully slow to articulate their views. Granted, there are times when one is more important, but the either-or tension between the two is best resolved by defining them as complements.

Forceful leadership and enabling leadership are both necessary. One reason for my choice of the terms is that *forceful* and *enabling* both have positive connotations. This is in contrast to the two pairs of terms, *Theory X* versus *Theory Y* and *autocratic* versus *participative*, where there is little doubt that one is desirable and the other not.

On the one hand, leaders need to be forceful—to assert themselves by means of their own intellect, vision, skills, and drive and to push others hard to perform. Forceful leaders take charge, very much make their presence felt, make it crystal clear what is expected, let very little deter them from achieving objectives, step up to the tough decisions, and so on.

On the other hand, leaders need to be enabling—to tap into, bring out, and show appreciation for the capabilities and intensity of other people. Enabling leaders do a great job of involving their people and of opening themselves to their influence—in setting the strategic direction and in making those decisions that affect the unit as a whole. And they give their subordinates plenty of latitude to do their jobs. They invest in their people's development and make sure that they feel valued.

If you take one type at a time, each can almost be seen as tantamount to leadership. Isn't forceful leadership exactly what is needed in this tough competitive environment? Forceful leadership is certainly wanted in organizational life. Leaders are called upon in many ways to be forces in a direct, personal sense. They must be strong and capable personally on a number of dimensions. And yet isn't enabling leadership just the sort of progressive, collective approach that has the best chance of meeting the competitive challenge by getting the whole organization involved and committed? Enabling leadership is also very much needed. Leaders are responsible for tapping into the strength and capabilities of other people. This is an indirect form of leadership, perhaps less visible but in fact no less useful and necessary than the obvious "I am in charge" type.

The overarching distinction between the forceful and enabling approaches to leadership is no more important than the concrete behaviors that operationalize each type. Table 1 lists some of the concrete managerial behaviors that operationalize the macro polarity. The section below on development needs will elaborate on several of these specific pairs of behaviors.

We will resist the temptation to choose one approach over the other.

Table 1
Forceful Leadership and Enabling Leadership: The Virtues

FORCEFUL	*ENABLING*
Leads personally. Is personally involved in solving his or her unit's problems.	Enables subordinates to lead. Is able to let go and give individuals the latitude to do their jobs.
Lets people know clearly and with feeling where he or she stands on issues. Declares himself or herself.	Is interested in where other people stand on issues. Is receptive to their ideas.
Makes tough calls—including those that have an adverse effect on people.	Is compassionate. Is responsive to people's needs and feelings.
Makes judgments. Zeros in on what is substandard or is not working—in an individual's or unit's performance.	Shows appreciation. Makes other people feel good about their contributions. Helps people feel valued.
Is competitive. Is highly motivated to excel and have his or her unit excel.	Is a team player. Helps other units or the larger organization perform well.
Has an intense can-do attitude. Expects everyone to do whatever it takes to get the job done.	Is realistic about limits on people's capacity to perform or produce.
Is confident. Gives people the feeling that he or she believes in self and his or her abilities.	Is modest. Is aware that he or she does not know everything, can be wrong.
Is persistent. Stays the course—even in the face of adversity.	Is flexible. Is willing to change course if the plan doesn't seem to be working.
Raises tough issues. Acts as a "forcing function."	Fosters harmony, contains conflict, defuses tension.

Versatility

Versatility is just that: having some capability on both sides of an opposing set. The Latin root of the word *versatility* means "to turn around." A versatile manager can turn around or pivot in either direction—toward forceful leadership or toward enabling leadership. If you are sitting in a swivel chair and forceful is at one end of the room and enabling at the other, what is your range of movement? If you can turn in both directions, you are versatile.

An early version of the word was *versable*, and it meant "changeable, inconstant, fickle." Sometimes, people mistakenly view versatility as inconsistency; however, manifested appropriately, in response to the demands of the job, it is an indisputable asset. As one executive I worked with put it, "I don't think it's inconsistent to empower and to give strong direction." It may seem inconsistent to turn over power some of the time and take over at other times, but that is what it takes to lead effectively.

The following description of a general manager, from the point of view of a subordinate, provides a prime example of versatility.

> He tries to foster harmony and to build a team. But on the other hand he's got confidence in his judgment and will make the tough call. And he can prioritize things. He'll come back to you with the priorities as he sees them, but he is more than willing to hear you and understand what you're saying and factor that into his decisions. He has just about the right amount of everything going for him I think. It's refreshing.

This general manager did his part but was open to the input of others. He was obviously capable but also built up the capability of his team.

Versatility consists of the ability not only to produce a variety of behaviors but also to read situations to determine which behavior is required. This is Donald Schon's (1983) definition of the consummate practitioner in any field. The measure of an engineer or architect or social worker or manager is not so much the body of knowledge and the set of skills that he or she has acquired, on the job or in school, but the ability to call upon those resources in the right way at the right time. The ultimate practitioner, thinking in action as Schon described it, does not lift a skill or bit of knowledge willy-nilly from his or her kit bag but adapts it to precisely fit the situation.

Versatility is a requirement of the managerial job. It has been well documented how varied the job of the manager is (Kotter, 1982; McCall, Morrison, & Hannan, 1978; Mintzberg, 1973). On a typical day the staccato

rhythm of the job can have the manager jumping every few minutes from one thing to another, and each of those things can require very different kinds of responses. On any given day the manager might: (a) have to bring all due intensity to bear on a product-development team that has fallen behind schedule on an innovation that the division's product leadership in the marketplace depends on; (b) counsel a talented young female manager who is unaccountably (to the manager) reluctant to speak up in staff meetings; (c) settle out of court a suit made by a small competitor but not so richly that it encourages other competitors to sue; and (d) charge out a long-term direct report who, despite being effective in the job for several years, is no longer able to keep up with the much bigger unit that has grown up under him.

Here is a snapshot, given to us by one of his peers, of an executive who might seem inconsistent but who was, in fact, effectively responding to the disparate demands of the job.

> This is a person I was impressed with. Two-thirds of the people thought he was the sweetest guy in the world and one-third thought he was the meanest guy around. When he needed to be a mean SOB he could be. But you didn't have his whole organization seeing him that way. He was dealing with circumstances.

The challenge of displaying seemingly antithetical behavior was captured well by the following question posed by a division manager: "Can you trust and also go in with the knife when you have to?" Juxtaposing tough action and empowerment and trust, he made the assertion that "you've got to have both because neither by itself will work in our environment."

Ecclesiastes (chapter 3, verses 1-8 in the Revised Standard Version of the Bible) reads:

> For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: . . . a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; . . . a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; . . . a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; . . . a time to love, and a time to hate.

These are the opposite situations with which we are confronted. Whether, in our lives or in our institutional existence, we are equal to all these tasks and in what measure is another matter. But to the extent that widely discrepant

demands are placed on managers, they are better off if they have a capacity, one way or another, to respond effectively to those demands.

A basketball player can be very good just shooting with the right hand. The truly accomplished player, however, learns to shoot with either hand. That way the big player close to the basket can go either way as play demands. At the highest levels, ambidextrousness makes the difference between good players and great players.

The demands inherent in managerial jobs require managers to exhibit a range of different, and at times seemingly contradictory, behaviors. But no manager has it all. Nor is it realistic to expect the large majority of managers to be able to meet all the various types of requirements equally well. But, as we will examine in depth below, it certainly helps not to be handicapped or to have a greatly restricted repertoire.

I want to emphasize here that versatility is not homogenization. Because management development is often a matter of moderating extremes, it is not surprising that versatility is sometimes interpreted as bland or nondescript. People jump to the conclusion that development will result in the sort of moderation that will rob leaders of their edge. One executive expressed his concern this way:

> The flaw in 360-degree feedback is the idea of the renaissance man—that you can do everything. My view is that you need to leverage unique strengths, rather than ask people to pull back from their strengths and suddenly get bland. I'd rather have somebody bipolar than bland, in the middle.

Other senior managers I know have raised similar concerns—about themselves or their peers being, in their words, "homogenized," "normalized," "neutered." The concern expressed is that if distinctly forceful types were to "develop," especially in response to feedback from other people in the company, they might bow to social pressure and conform to prevailing norms, thereby losing their distinctive power and leadership ability.

Rather than bland or homogeneous, versatility means increased range and flexibility. To increase the versatility of a markedly forceful or enabling manager is not to deprive that person of the capacity to be extremely forceful or enabling but to add a greater capacity to do the opposite of what he or she already does well.

The manager doesn't lose the strength he or she has; it remains available when the need arises. A strong, centrist, dominant leader doesn't give up

the capacity to take over; it is just done more selectively. An outspoken manager is no less capable of speaking out if he or she learns to listen better or ceases to be so compelled on principle to voice objections if a sacred principle is apparently violated. To develop greater capability on the other side of the midpoint of a continuum is not to average out capability on the two sides into a bland, shapeless, homogenized skill set. Versatility isn't forever hugging the middle of the continuum. In fact, it is the flexibility to roam more freely along the continuum, potentially from one end to the other. It is the reduction of constraints, and this should appeal to goal-oriented, can-do leaders.

Context is important because it is the set of circumstances or the particular challenge facing the executive that determines what leadership capability is called for. Different types of organizations or different stages of an organization's development may dictate which approach to leadership is predominantly needed. Turnaround situations, for example, put a premium on forceful leadership because various tough actions are required to kick-start the reversal in the organization's fortunes. Likewise, different subordinates require different approaches. Consistent with Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard's (1988) theory of situational leadership, inexperienced, dependent, or less motivated people need more direction and guidance, and experienced self-starters respond better to an enabling approach. The qualification here is that managers will not vary their approach if they are so highly identified with one type of leadership that they rule out the other.

Enabling Leadership as "Virtuous"

I can assert that forceful leadership and enabling leadership complement each other and that they are equally necessary to effectiveness. My experience, however, has shown me that most managers would prefer to be identified as being forceful. As a veteran of a well-known corporation said, "If you weren't a bit of a tyrant you were [seen as being] a weak manager."

Because of this prevailing attitude, and to show how the enabling approach can work well in an organizational setting, I think it would be helpful here to describe an effective manager—actually a composite of two individuals I have worked with—who favors the enabling approach.

This leader is capable of using both approaches but his primary managerial signature is an enabling style: the way he includes people, gives them a bona fide chance to contribute, and helps to make them feel valued. This

approach evidences itself in conversations. He is attentive, willing to be influenced, and recognizes and rewards people who add value.

His approach also plays out on a larger scale in his running of the entire business unit. In a way that the whole corporation noticed, partly because it was unusual for that company, this general manager took over a business by holding a town hall meeting that included everyone in the division right down to the shop floor. Those not physically present assembled at their respective locations and were hooked up by satellite. The purpose of the meeting was to take stock of the competitive position of the business in the marketplace. The general manager reported on conversations with the company's major customers. The customers rated them down, he told everyone, on product quality and on cost and in fact ranked them last or next to last among the customers' suppliers. The executive used this disturbing, even shocking, input as an impetus to develop a strategy collectively. Using the input from this meeting, he and his staff fashioned a tight strategic framework, complete with time lines and metrics, reduced to a single page and rolled out in a series of meetings at all sites which he personally led. From that point on he met quarterly with everyone in the division to track progress and to brainstorm solutions to problems. An employee survey revealed good understanding of the strategic direction and quite high confidence in senior management. In eighteen months the division had begun to turn the corner. His fellow managers have had their doubts about his unorthodox approach and, for them, his "touchy-feely" style. And because he is so inclusive, he can be slow to make decisions. But no one disputes the results, financial or organizational.

The moral of this story is that, even though the enabling approach is still in the distinct minority in the executive population, it can be just as effective as forceful leadership. Truly effective, enabling executives are fully capable of aggressive change and are capable in their own way of forcing behaviors.

Development Needs as Lack of Versatility

If we accept the premise that each side of the forceful-enabling polarity is a virtue, then we have a way of understanding how senior managers develop performance problems. They do so by taking one of the two approaches to an extreme (Table 2, pp. 14-15). It occurred to me in working with an executive a couple of years ago that he, like so many of his peers, was, as the saying goes, a force to be reckoned with. And how did he get into trouble? By

being too much of a force. The same thing applies to the enabling side. As one senior leader said in reference to a talented, highly effective, but distinctly unversatile executive who reports to him, "There is nothing in the world that is purely good."

When Virtues Become Vices

In my work I often hear people say, "That's a weakness tied to a strength," meaning that the weakness is actually a byproduct of something the individual does well. Let's see how this applies to a series of specific pairs of forceful-enabling behaviors.

Getting involved personally versus granting autonomy. It is important, on the forceful side, that senior leaders, at least on certain high-priority issues in their units, assert themselves personally and get directly involved in resolving those issues. Leaders must be capable of taking full control and leading personally. On the enabling side, executives must empower their subordinates, must make it possible for them to lead, and must give them the autonomy they want and need to do their jobs. Is one of these functions more important than the other? Doubtful. Both are needed.

If leading personally and getting personally involved in solving a unit's problems is a virtue, it is also true that doing that to an extreme, taking over completely and depriving subordinates of autonomy, is a vice. Conversely, if affording subordinates sufficient latitude is a virtue, then it is also true that overdoing that, giving people too much autonomy, is a vice. What is interesting is that leaders who excel at taking charge tend not to do as well at letting go, and vice versa.

Declaring oneself versus hearing from other people. On the forceful side, leaders need to let people know clearly and with feeling where they stand. They must declare themselves. On the enabling side, leaders need to take a genuine interest in where other people stand on issues. Leaders must be receptive to the ideas of others in order to benefit from those ideas.

Either of these taken to an extreme creates problems. As important as declaring oneself can be, the leader should not deprive other people of the chance to speak on issues. On the other hand, although it is necessary to take a genuine interest in where other people stand on issues, the leader must let others know where he or she stands. Leaders who know their own minds and speak out easily tend to have trouble being receptive and solicitous of other people's thoughts, and vice versa.

Making tough calls versus being sensitive to people's needs. Another familiar pairing, which Morgan McCall, Michael Lombardo, and Ann

Table 2
Forceful Leadership and Enabling Leadership: Virtues and Vices

Too Forceful	*FORCEFUL*	*ENABLING*	*Too Enabling*
Takes over, doesn't give people enough rope.	Leads personally. Is personally involved in solving his or her unit's problems.	Enables subordinates to lead. Is able to let go and give individuals the latitude to do their jobs.	Empowers to a fault. Gives people too much rope.
Other people don't speak out, aren't heard.	Lets people know clearly and with feeling where he or she stands on issues. Declares himself or herself.	Is interested in where other people stand on issues. Is receptive to their ideas.	People don't know where he or she stands.
Is insensitive, callous.	Makes tough calls—including those that have an adverse effect on people.	Is compassionate. Is responsive to people's needs and feelings.	Is overly accommodating. Is nice to people at the expense of the work.
Is harshly judgmental. Dismisses the contributions of others. Is an "unloving critic."	Makes judgments. Zeros in on what is substandard or is not working—in an individual's or unit's performance.	Shows appreciation. Makes other people feel good about their contributions. Helps people feel valued.	Gives false praise or praises indiscriminately. Is an "uncritical lover."

Is parochial, a partisan, rivalrous.	Is competitive. Is highly motivated to excel and have his or her unit excel.	Is a team player. Helps other units or the larger organization perform well.	Sacrifices sharp focus on own unit.
Pushes too hard. Demands the impossible. Risks burnout.	Has an intense can-do attitude. Expects everyone to do whatever it takes to get the job done.	Is realistic about limits on people's capacity to perform or produce.	Is too understanding. Doesn't expect enough.
Is arrogant. Fills his or her space and some of yours, too.	Is confident. Gives people the feeling that he or she believes in self and his or her abilities.	Is modest. Is aware that he or she does not know everything, can be wrong.	Is self-effacing or down on self. Doesn't fill own space.
Sticks rigidly to a course of action, despite strong evidence it's not working.	Is persistent. Stays the course—even in the face of adversity.	Is flexible. Is willing to change course if the plan doesn't seem to be working.	Is inconstant, changeable. Is too quick to change course.
Forces issues when finesse would work better.	Raises tough issues. Acts as a "forcing function."	Fosters harmony, contains conflict, defuses tension.	Avoids or smooths over tense issues that need attention.

Morrison (1988, p. 144) identified as a tension needing management, is the need to be tough versus compassionate. On the one hand, leaders are called upon to make tough calls—for example, laying people off or killing a long-term project that is unlikely to pay off. Tough is defined as making decisions that run counter to the needs of the people involved, that take away something, that hurt people. Making tough calls requires a resolve. On the other hand, leaders need to be compassionate, meaning they must be responsive to the plight of individuals—to a crisis in a subordinate's life or to the stresses and strains that occur on the job.

If making tough calls, even when they have an adverse effect on people, is a virtue, then taking that to an extreme, where the leader becomes callous and insensitive to people's needs, is a vice. In the same way, compassion becomes a vice if being accommodating to people takes precedence over the work. Executives with a proven ability to take tough action—in turnaround situations, for example—often lack sensitivity, and those executives who have ample "people-sensitivity" tend to have trouble being tough—for example, in removing poor performers.

Making critical judgments versus showing appreciation. Although the capacity to make judgments and identify deficiencies in an individual's or unit's performance is a great asset, doing that exclusively becomes a liability. A critical approach can degenerate into one that is harshly judgmental and even dismissive of the contributions of others. Likewise, if a capacity to show appreciation for a job well done is an asset, then showering praise on people indiscriminately and even falsely is certainly a liability. Executives who possess a well-developed critical faculty are not usually known for praising people, and executives who are more appreciative and positively reinforcing may have a hard time criticizing a subordinate's performance directly.

Having a can-do attitude versus accepting limits. On the forceful side, there is no doubt that an intense can-do attitude is indispensable to executives if they are to inspire others to high performance. The risk is that this attitude will be pushed to the point where the leader perpetually demands too much, pushes others too hard, and runs the risk of burnout. On the enabling side, leaders need to be realistic about the limits on human performance and endurance so that the organization can preserve its most precious asset, its capability. Yet the understanding leader runs the risk of settling for too little. Leaders who are admirably attentive to their subordinates' need for balance in their lives, and who are careful about not intruding on family time, sometimes unduly limit the accomplishments of their organizations.

Conveying confidence versus showing modesty, humility. We certainly want our senior leaders to be confident; their faith in themselves can rub off on the rest of the organization. Taken too far, however, confidence becomes arrogance, which only gets in the way. On the other hand, a certain modesty in senior leaders is disarming, especially when it is accompanied by high achievement. Yet, when taken too far, that otherwise desirable quality becomes self-doubt that can have a depressive effect on others. One senior executive I know of had a habit of blurting out his worries to large groups of employees, who had trouble putting such confessional statements into perspective.

These several pairs constitute only a sample of the managerial behaviors that can be seen in terms of forceful and enabling. In addition to playing out in relationships with subordiantes and with peers, the forceful-enabling distinction can also apply to relationships with superiors. A leader who is upwardly forceful is able to disagree with, or push back on, superiors. In the extreme case, however, the subordinate challenges the superior about virtually everything and becomes difficult to manage. Conversely, a leader who is upwardly enabling is responsive to the requests or initiatives of superiors but in extreme cases lacks the ability to speak out when required.

Lopsidedness or Restricted Movement

In general, for any given pair of opposing characteristics such as those described above, there is a tendency for executives to be strong on one side, and liable to take that to an extreme, while at the same time being relatively weak on the other side. Thus, we have a situation, which I refer to as *lopsided*,[1] where one side is overweighted and the other side is underweighted. A lopsided manager places greater weight or emphasis on one side of the forceful-enabling polarity and less weight on the other.

This typically describes a development need. In these terms development is defined as moving toward a weighting that is more even. An important lesson here is that the two sides are intimately bound up, so that to become less extreme on the overweighted side virtually requires that the individual place more weight on the other side. And, conversely, for an individual to address a development need consisting of an underdeveloped aspect virtually requires that some weight be taken off the opposing side.

Managers are usually evaluated against lists of criteria. Sometimes it's a company-generated list of leadership attributes, and sometimes it's a 360-

[1] Originally the word *lopsided* applied to ships. A lopsided ship leans toward starboard or port because it is heavier on one side.

degree instrument developed by outside specialists. (For samples of lists from the academic world and the corporate world, see the Appendix.)

In order to emphasize versatility, it can be useful to think about leadership attributes as pairs of opposites. The typical, unpaired list does not do as good a job of bringing out the need for versatility. The two dimensions tough and compassionate or their equivalent, for example, make it onto many lists of managerial characteristics. If we juxtapose the two, because managers are often high on one and low and the other—very tough and not very compassionate, or the reverse—we can easily see the relationship between the two attributes. In addition to how one does on each characteristic, a manager can be evaluated on how he or she does on the pair.

Another way to think about the need for versatility is in terms of freedom of movement. From this perspective, lack of versatility is restricted range of movement. Managers who lack versatility can't turn as freely to one side as to the other. To repeat the analogy of the swivel chair, they can turn one way but their movement in the other direction is restricted. As a result these managers not only spend less time looking toward the restricted direction, they spend more time in the area where they can move freely. Also, by looking primarily one way, they may leave themselves exposed on the other side and run the risk of being blindsided.

Whether we think of lack of versatility as lopsideness or as restricted range of movement, the important point is that performance problems show up in two ways: Managers don't merely underdo one of the approaches; they overdo the other.

Let's look at how this plays out on the job. What follows are two case studies, each based on the experience of several executives I have studied. A caution: Most executives are not as extreme as those in these cases.

Case of Overly Forceful, Not Enabling Enough

Let's call the first executive Glen Herroh. In his early forties, he had already reached a high position with his company because of the strength of his obvious talent and impressive business accomplishments. Glen's leadership was distinguished most of all by his personal efficacy and power. He had developed his innate intellectual gifts to a high degree. He was intensely, even fiercely, task-oriented, the sort of leader who would lock on an objective and not back off until that objective was achieved, however many months or years later, however many obstacles. Glen took great personal satisfaction in using his talents—in studying a complex business situation and coming up

with a stretch objective, in leading a discussion of an operating problem, in using the questioning, Socratic method to test the logic of a direct report.

Glen fairly reveled in his efficacy and operated from the "hero model" (Hitt, 1988). Such leaders derive great satisfaction from personally saving the day and prevailing against heavy odds. Glen once explained to me that "self-actualization comes from the impossible dream achieved."

Without revealing the exact details of Glen's upbringing, let us simply say that he was born into difficult circumstances in which he felt wronged. It could have been race, religion, or ethnic background. It could also have been the way he was treated by his parents. Some individuals succumb to adversity. Glen reacted by making it his lifelong ambition to prevail in this world. Although his ambition lapsed for several years starting in junior high school, and it was only after he almost flunked out of college that he "snapped out of it," Glen used his sense of being "one-down" to fuel his rise. Note that, although this is characteristic of several senior people I have worked with, this is not the only childhood antecedent of forceful leadership.

A major criticism of Glen, despite his talents and accomplishments, was that he did not make the best use of the talents and contributions of other people. As smart and quick-witted as he was, he was impatient with people who didn't "get it" right away. In fact, he was capable from time to time of being abusive, if anything important went wrong or a subordinate failed to do something the way Glen thought it should be done. His preference for Socratic discussions in the round followed the "hub and spoke" model. Most of the action and interaction occurred between him and one or another of his subordinates, and comparatively little interaction took place among subordinates. In other words, the "rim of the wheel" was underdeveloped. In general, he did a lot of the talking in conversations and meetings and, therefore, made it difficult for other people to contribute. One of his people offered this analogy:

> Being in a meeting with you is like playing Jeopardy. I've got my finger on the buzzer, but you always hit the buzzer first. So I never get to feel smart. If I had another second or two, I'd come up with the right answer, but I never get the chance. We all know that you're smarter than us, but that doesn't need to be proven. If you let people have a chance, the organization could develop more confidence.

A co-worker used this imagery to capture the connection between Glen's considerable talent and his limitation in taking full advantage of the talents of others:

> Glen is extraordinarily capable—talented to the max. But he could do less and be more effective if he would let those that he works with work with him. [Note the use of the word *let*, meaning "enable."] He is a shining star. He's a nova. But there are some other stars in the galaxy that he could work with in a really nice harmony.

The extent to which Glen Herroh was heavily weighted on the forceful side and underweighted on the enabling side was clearly manifested on the Executive Roles Questionnaire that I have developed with some colleagues. Twelve of Glen's co-workers rated him on the several dimensions of forceful leadership listed in Table 1. (These ratings are not composite but are the actual results of one of the eight executives on whom this case is based.) On all but one of the forceful dimensions he was rated as being too forceful. On all but two of the enabling dimensions he was rated as not being enabling enough. To see most clearly the seesaw effect, I did a simple count of the number of times his co-workers rated him too forceful or not forceful enough and too enabling or not enabling enough. As Table 3 shows, his total score on too forceful was 46; on not forceful enough, 2. His total score on not enabling enough was 65; on too enabling, 0.

Table 3
Glen Herroh's Leadership
(on the Executive Roles Questionnaire)

	Enabling	Forceful
Too little	0	46
Too much	65	2

Case of Overly Enabling, Not Forceful Enough

One of the things that impressed people the most about the executive I will call Bill Borden was how well he listened. He was truly receptive to other people's ideas. He wasn't just interested; he was understanding. He had a capacity for putting himself in the place of others. He did more than just

take in what people said; he generally let them run with their ideas and act on them without him looking over their shoulders. Bill was a constructive, considerate person. He treated people well. All in all, he was a distinctly positive people leader, a classic enabling executive who listened, empowered, encouraged, recognized, and coached. He had a lot of ego, but it did not get in the way. He prided himself on being a team player who took his place as the head of his organization but also joined the team he led. He had been successful in a series of challenging jobs, and this was in no small measure because his enabling style had won him enthusiastic followers. Because of his admirable personal qualities, which included a high level of integrity and a strong sense of fair play, he was widely trusted and popular. Many people felt good about Bill Borden as a person.

His performance problems were a function of taking some of these strengths to an extreme. He was criticized for "empowering to a fault," meaning that he turned over too much responsibility and was not enough of a force himself. This was clearly apparent on the Executive Roles Questionnaire, where all eight respondents indicated that he was not personally involved enough in solving his unit's problems; four of the eight indicated that he enabled his subordinates too much.

In giving his people plenty of responsibility, Bill did not demand enough of them, did not clearly express his expectations, and did not express his dissatisfaction strongly enough when they failed to meet his expectations. He was understanding to the point of being too understanding, too tolerant. As a colleague told him in one of the discussions that followed a feedback session:

> You choose to live with situations that aren't working, and you're tolerant of people who are terrible! You could fight for people who would do a better job and who would make your life better. You let X choose between two jobs when you know that he would do better in one of those jobs.

Bill had trouble imagining putting his foot down in such a case. Why? "Fear of offending," Bill said.

He was also criticized for not being decisive enough when it came to making the tough calls. This is where his popularity, or more accurately his need to be popular, hurt him. On the Executive Roles Questionnaire, six of eight co-workers rated him as not decisive enough.

A related fault, especially in the eyes of top management, was that he did not drive change as hard as he should. Several members of the top group worried that his sense of urgency needed to be stronger. One top executive complained that he was "too reasonable." Overall, they were not sure he was sufficiently tough to make the dramatic changes his unit required. On the Executive Roles Questionnaire, seven of eight people reported he did not make enough tough calls; six of eight said that he was too concerned with fostering harmony.

The last major concern was that his people did not know clearly enough where he stood strategically. Of course his unit had a strategy, at least for the near to midterm, but it seemed to his team that the strategy was essentially a group product and that they did not really know what Bill believed. The strategy was, in a sense, a coauthored document. It was as if his voice were lost, or at least muted, in his collective process of leadership. This showed up clearly on the Executive Roles Questionnaire; all eight co-workers indicated that he didn't declare himself enough, and four of eight indicated that he was too receptive to other people's ideas.

In summary, Bill Borden was a clear case of an overly enabling leader. Summing across the nine dimensions of forceful leadership on the Executive Roles Questionnaire, you find that his score on too little was 49 and on too much was 3. Across the nine dimensions of enabling leadership, his score was 7 on too little and 29 on too much (Table 4).

Table 4
Bill Borden's Leadership
(on the Executive Roles Questionnaire)

	Enabling	Forceful
Too little	29	3
Too much	7	49

A clue about what went into creating this lopsided pattern came from information we gathered about Bill's childhood. He received very strong messages from his parents to be a winner but to stay humble: "Don't win at

someone's expense," "Don't run up the score," "Be a good sport," "Play by the rules," "It's the team that wins," "Help your teammates out," "It's not important to be the star." These parental restraints probably account for some of his reluctance to act forcefully and the inhibition he felt on his power.

What it Takes to Increase Versatility

Taking the view that performance problems in managers often represent a lack of versatility—with versatility defined as the ability to turn or pivot from one managerial capacity to a complementary one—sheds light on what is involved in helping managers develop. Performance problems or development needs frequently arise because one leadership approach is emphasized at the expense of the other. In the extreme case, managers become so enthralled with one approach that they completely lose sight of the other. In their behavior the problem shows up as difficulty turning in one direction or the other. In their minds they are so identified with one approach that they in effect turn their backs on the other. In my experience of the more extreme cases, managers cannot turn a certain way because they will not turn that way.

Thus, what stands in the way of further development is the same thing that restricted the range of movement in the first place. It is the inner aspect—the person's beliefs and feelings about each side of the polarity. And the inner aspect is tied up in the tendency to polarize.

The irony of this polarizing is that if one side is preferred and used to the virtual exclusion of the other, then the very approach that is valued is put in jeopardy. If a manager, driven in general and consumed in this instance with a passion to maintain the company's dominant position in an intensely competitive market, insists on having everyone always think big and move quickly, to the point where people are constantly overloaded and chronically overworked, then he or she jeopardizes what is prized—by putting people at risk of eventual burnout.

Learning to Emphasize the Underdeveloped Side

For managers to add to their behavioral repertoire they must contend with their underlying attitudes toward the skills they lack. To increase their versatility is a matter of learning new skills. But it is just as much a question of changing values. People are unlikely to develop skills that they do not value. A major obstacle to becoming more versatile—expanding one's repertoire—is one's beliefs. Thus, managers may actually be opposed *in*

principle to a managerial practice. A highly principled executive who forced issues on principle, who "stood in front of freight trains," took on the CEO in a top management meeting over the impression made on employees of remodeling the executive offices during a cut-back. This is taking the forcing function to an extreme.

A co-worker described the limits on this executive's versatility in terms of a set of golf clubs:

> He has no sand-trap skills, doesn't like using the putter. He prefers the driver. If you have nine clubs in the bag, he has not perfected using the nine clubs and may actually look upon using all of them as a breach of his integrity.

In this executive's mind, not being direct and forceful compromises his principles and is an example of being political in the bad sense of the term.

Thus, a behavior that is antithetical to what a leader believes in, something that goes against his or her principles, is not something the person is likely to adopt. Such leaders are a poor prospect for becoming proficient in a skill based on values different from their own. It is almost as if they take the attitude that "I won't stoop to doing that."

This is an example of the strong aversion that often comes into play when managers entertain the possibility of taking on a new behavior. *Aversion* is a good word because its root once again means "to turn," in this case to turn away from something out of distaste or repugnance. They want nothing to do with it because it runs counter to their beliefs. An aversion can also contain an element of fear. A person can literally be afraid of becoming this other thing.

Aversion, because of strongly held beliefs and because of fear, is an integral part of the polarizing that takes place in lopsided managers. When executives who overdo forceful and underdo enabling think about becoming more enabling, what do they worry about? Becoming weak. It's as if distinctly forceful managers look over to the enabling side, perhaps with a list like Table 2 in front of them, and see not the virtues but the excesses. They look right past the advantages to the excesses, and, not surprisingly, they recoil. Similarly, when executives who overdo enabling and underdo forceful contemplate a more forceful style, what are they afraid of? Becoming loud and aggressive. Bill Borden, for example, reacted emotionally at first to the data that indicated his extreme enabling tendencies. "I'll be damned if I'll become an SOB because I don't like what it would do to my leadership or my

life! I like being an enabling manager." They glance over to the forceful side, disregard the functions or virtues of that approach, and fixate on the excesses. Both types of manager identify the other approach to leadership with its worst excesses and want no part of it. Their fear of taking on the ugly features of the other side prevents them from appreciating what is useful about that approach to leadership. The more extreme the specialization in either approach, the greater the tendency to polarize. The closer they sit to one pole, the more fiercely they identify with it and the more they savage the other approach.

The tendency to polarize is a visceral thing that may well have its roots in a formative experience that cast the individual in the mold we now find him or her. Bill Borden had an aversion to being "pushy" that he felt arose from being the second child behind a dominant older brother who was forever having run-ins with their father. Bill told us that he decided at a young age that he would have none of that; he elected to "lie low." This "low profile," as he called it, is accompanied to this day by a strong distaste for loud, aggressive people, a description that applies to some of his colleagues. Like Bill, leaders may be turned off by the prospect of becoming at all like their opposite numbers. The forces—fear and anger—that drove them to one side threaten to keep them there.

Learning to De-emphasize the Overdeveloped Side

To increase versatility requires more than acceptance of the underdeveloped side. It also depends on taking some emphasis off the approach to leadership that is presently favored. Some may worry that a reduced emphasis will sacrifice a manager's strength. But that is exactly the point here: The strong attachment to the manager's current way of operating can get in the way of development.

Thus to become more versatile, managers must not only increase the value they place on the neglected side, they must also decrease somewhat the value they have placed on the favored side. In fact, consistent with the nature of lopsidedness, the performance problem stems as much from an overemphasis and overinvestment as it does from an underemphasis and an underinvestment. This is another way to say that strengths can become weaknesses.

It is no easy matter to diminish the emotional attachment to the preferred approach to leadership, and that strong attachment can pose a huge obstacle to development. As one executive observed, "Some people can't change. They fall in love with what they've emphasized. It becomes a religious thing." Managers keep a tight grip on their favorite skill set out of an abiding faith that it will get the job done for them.

Another reason for the continuing heavy investment in the side that is already strong is, I believe, a fear of not being strong enough in that respect. It is so vitally important to the person to be strong in that way, it is such a high value, that he or she actually is afraid of not being strong enough. Given the absolute faith in one way of being, it's as if the manager feels that he or she can never have enough of it. Put another way, it is an ideal state, a state of perfection, that by definition can never be attained, and therefore the individual is always worried about coming up short of the ideal. Bill Borden had obviously (to others) earned the trust of his people, yet he worried constantly about whether he was a good enough person. A peer put it to him this way:

> You carry around a bucketful of "good-guy capital." Good-guy capital spills out of that bucket, it's so full. But your "bad-guy capital" bucket is empty.

In other words, stop worrying about whether you are enough of a good guy. You have built up so much goodwill that you can get tougher and take unpopular stands and your people would tolerate and even welcome it. This advice was helpful to Bill but was also hard for him to take in because he was so caught up in his belief and his anxiety.

Another, related, obstacle is the worry that executives who are lopsided have about the harmful effects of easing up on their intensity level. Their intensity is them. Even as it takes a toll, they count on it to make them effective and to ensure their success in the face of stiff challenges. There can be an element of superstition as well. It is as if they are saying to themselves: "This is how I know to be effective and if I give up any of this precious commodity, this fuel, I may no longer be the leader I want to be." One executive got credit from his peers in the months following his development effort for "taking the edge off," meaning that he dominated less and listened more and had greater empathy for other people. Yet the executive himself was worried that he had lost some of his intensity. "I'm used to going 110 mph and so I feel guilty for only going 80," he said.

Another executive, in a discussion of how intense and driven he was, put it this way:

> The things I've gotten positive feedback on over the years come from not being relaxed. I've gotten positive feedback from superiors: We feel we can count on you. I say, that's wonderful. But it doesn't cause you to relax. It requires you to be intense.

I reflected back to him, "You wear the mantle of responsibility as if it's made out of lead." He responded, "The one I'm given is made out of aluminum but I turn it into lead." So, for executives who go to extremes to change, they must work through their possessive feelings about the drive and intensity that got them there.

In fact, based on my work with executives, I believe that moderating a strength does not diminish the strength. Just the opposite: Moderation enhances a strength. In moderation, what gets reduced is not the strength itself but the overdependence on it, which is a weakness. One executive suggested in a conversation with his peers that intensity in the raw form found in young executives is actually no longer effective once they reach senior levels.

> At our level, raw intensity—basic energy and competitiveness of the kind you want to see in a recruit—is frightening in a senior executive. So a lot of the softening is necessary and appropriate.

Although by no means advocating any slackening in focus or sense of urgency, he spoke for a smoothing of the rough edge of intense drive.

The idea of moderating a strength tends to cause everyone who has a stake in the executive's effectiveness to fear that the strength will be lost. The fear is especially strong if the executive has led an obviously successful organization, even if his or her methods trouble people greatly. The attitude is: "You can't argue with success." When talking with some co-workers of a successful, driven, problematic executive, I have often found that as soon as they voice a criticism, they take it back or question their right to make it.

Executives themselves, upon hearing extensive feedback that they go to extremes, worry that they will lose what has made them effective if they tinker with it. Glen Herroh said, "I don't want to trade off my strengths to correct my weaknesses." It seems as if the strength is operated by an on-off switch. Adjust it at all and it's off entirely. If it is not on all the way, intense managers get anxious. In reality, as executives who do finally change come to realize, it is possible to adjust an overemphasized strength without losing that strength. Rheostat-like control is possible. The adjustment is known among middle-aged folks as "mellowing." It is the anxiety overlaying the strength, not the strength itself, that diminishes. The capacity itself emerges unscathed. Glen Herroh, a sports fan, told the story of Sandy Koufax, the brilliant Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher in the 1960s, who had a 98-mph fastball but didn't become a great pitcher until he developed a curve ball and a change-up to go with it.

When they diminish an overemphasized strength, managers gain effectiveness for two reasons. First, they stop overdoing the strength, taking it to destructive extremes. *Sports Illustrated* reported that Koufax came into his own when he followed his catcher's advice "to stop trying to blow his fastball by the hitters, to try more curves and change-ups, and to throw his fastball less hard and more accurately" (Olsen, 1994). Walter Alston, the Dodgers coach, said that Koufax was less effective when he pitched with "all muscle and no finesse, trying to use 100 percent of his strength, when his experience has taught him that he is most effective when he uses about 90 percent of it in a steady, rhythmical pattern" (p. 44). One executive reported a similar lesson. "At the start of this [development] process I worried that the good part weakens. But, no, the bad part weakens, and the good part strengthens."

Another advantage in de-emphasizing an overdeveloped strength is that managers are then able to make more selective use of that capacity. In no longer making that attribute an absolutely supreme value, they can begin to see the limits of its utility and can make more discriminating use of it. Glen Herroh concluded after getting feedback on being much too strong and intense, "I don't have to give up my fastball. I just don't have to throw it all the time."

The Primary Development Task for Forceful Managers

Forceful managers place great faith in their own powers—their ideas, decisions, vision, convictions, focus, drive. When in doubt, they fall back on their own resources. As a result, they tend to have trouble listening, turning subordinates loose, resisting the temptation to take over when problems arise, and developing the capabilities of their subordinates. The force they exert can shut people down and turn them off. One way or another, overly forceful managers are at risk of losing the potential contributions of others. In relying so heavily on what *they* are able to do, they don't enable others enough. In fact, they disable others.

Glen Herroh received advice along this line from his co-workers, mainly subordinates:

> He needs to do it [listen] so people believe he's listening and take into consideration what they are saying.
>
> I'd like to see him get more input from below and value it.

> If I had to identify one thing he should change, I guess it would be his ability to trust more people. And be open to more interaction with those people—to help him run the business, gather more input, make decisions, things like that.
>
> He can take his greatness to another level if he would take other people's ideas seriously.
>
> He needs to have faith in others.
>
> He doesn't trust the organization. That's a key word. I'm sure in many cases he doesn't trust individuals. He doesn't have to trust every individual, but I think he needs to be able to trust some individuals for specific situations and really solicit their opinion without interjecting. He's got to change.

Trust—confidence and faith in others and their capacity to contribute—is what people wanted from Glen. They also wanted consideration, not in the sense of being nice to people but in the sense of his considering what they think. His agenda for development came down to trust. Could he place enough trust in his people's skills and commitment to do two things: first, be receptive to their attempts to influence him and, second, turn over responsibility to them without yanking it back at the slightest suggestion of a problem. A superior summed it up this way:

> As incredibly successful and talented as he is, he doesn't seem to have the personal confidence to trust others. For whatever reason, he is not able to convince his people, with the style he uses today, that he trusts them.

Glen Herroh ultimately recognized that by relying so heavily on his own intellect and energy and determination to move the organization forward and by overpowering and even intimidating his people, he deprived himself of their full contributions. They knew what he thought, but he didn't consistently know or take seriously what they thought. To the surprise of many people in the company, Glen was able in the next year to make an adjustment in his role and operating style. During that time he almost completely stopped being abrasive with subordinates. He learned to listen better and heard people out before saying his piece. Finally, he granted his subordinates more au-

tonomy to do their jobs. Glen remained a star but made more room for other stars in the galaxy.

About a year after receiving his feedback, Glen reported the following:

> I've been able to achieve a lot, and I've done it by being more focused on strategy and process versus what I personally need to do on Friday. Probably the most important change is I'm learning to let the hunters hunt. I still have a need to prove I'm the best hunter, the best fighter pilot, in the world. So it's not easy. I've done a couple of bonehead things recently, but at least I recognized them. I think this process has given me the confidence to take that new role. I used to take pride in getting my in-box into my out-box better than anyone. But that's not what is expected of me. Now I feel I'm a better manager because I'm learning to use others better.

The Sandy Koufax story helped Glen understand the shift required of him. One of his peers, upon hearing about Glen's decision not to rely so much on his fastball, engaged him in a conversation that built on the baseball analogy.

> **Peer:** The key to this—you've got to develop confidence in the other pitches. Also, let the catcher call the pitches.
> **Glen:** You can always shake off the catcher if you don't like the pitch he calls.
> **Peer:** But how many times can you shake him off? More important, *you* don't have to strike everyone out, as Koufax believed. Let the rest of the team help get people out. You know, if you strike out the side, it takes a minimum of nine pitches. But if you use your fielders, you could do it in three pitches.

Glen had been afraid that he would lose both effectiveness and intensity if he focused more on relationships.

> I used to think I could overcome everything with performance. It was almost a perception of combativeness. I worried if I got softer, I couldn't win. But it's been exactly the opposite: by focusing on relationships I think I'm more effective. I don't think I've given up anything on the drive side but I've gained ten times on the relationship side.

As we will see below in the discussion of development for enabling managers, a move in the desired direction depends on an increase in self-confidence. What really happens is that the manager stops worrying so much about whether he or she is good enough. As Glen said,

> I've been striving always with the idea that I've got to do better than the next guy because I've got handicaps. That's what drives me. I still have that nagging doubt. I guess I'm afraid to lose that handle. This process [especially the affirmation of his talents and track record] has helped me to understand I don't have to be quite as driven that way. It's given me the confidence that if I get into a situation that doesn't go well, I'd still have value and I'll still be okay. I've been able to accept it. It's stayed with me. That's taken off pressure, a lot of pressure.

The point here isn't that Glen transformed himself; he didn't. He took a step in the right direction, and the change was in the direction of making better use of other people.

The Primary Development Task for Enabling Managers

Being too much of a force amounts to calling upon one's own talents and resources to the point where one disables other people. On the other hand, being too enabling of others amounts to disabling oneself to some degree. Enabling leaders place great faith in others and need to develop greater faith in themselves. The trick is to make use of both one's own and others' capabilities.

In the months following his feedback, Bill Borden, who was a bona fide high achiever with impressive credentials, began to move in the direction of greater forcefulness and self-confidence. He held back somewhat less and did more to make his presence felt. Subordinates used the following words to describe him: "sense of urgency," "more demanding," "greater accountability," "more decisive," "more aggressive," and "more directive"—in other words, more forceful. Bill said,

> People are commenting on my decisiveness. I'm asking them. The decisiveness is coming out in staff meetings, which used to lack a clear agenda and lack closure. Now the agenda is sent out ahead, and the meeting goes quickly and smoothly and we make decisions. It's not perfect though. I still procrastinate on some things.

The net effect is a stronger sense of Bill as the leader.

In general, development for enabling managers is in the direction of a greater presence, intellectual force, force of will. One subordinate of Bill's described the change as a "leap in recognition as the leader; people are getting more confidence in his determination and his vision." Another saw "more self-confidence, more drive, less patience with the way things are." Confidence was in fact an issue. On the Executive Roles Questionnaire he had been rated as not confident enough.

Bill had to overcome a reluctance to make demands on other people. He explained, "My expectations—to be perfect, to gather 100 percent of the information—have always been mainly of myself and not as much of others." He had been working eighty hours a week, partly because he found it more comfortable to do some tasks himself than to ask other people to do them.

A theme running through the data on change in Bill was that he was learning to speak up more. He was doing more "communicating of his own views," rather than facilitating other people in expressing their views. Bill reported,

> In the last three to four months I've been more open with my feelings, expressing my feelings. I realize I have been reticent about speaking my mind—giving people the benefit of what I know, from years of experience. A lot of it has to do with the barriers that grew up in my mind.

With the increased willingness to speak out came a boost in self-confidence.

> There is more of a confidence factor than several months ago. Sometimes in the past there was an unwillingness to say my piece, but I think I've done a good job of changing that. I don't have the hesitancy—with subordinates, peers, superiors. I overcame a barrier in my mind: If I have something to say, say it. So I've overcome somewhat of an inhibition to say anything to anybody. I feel very good about that. I don't think I'm kidding myself. I can feel it. It's visible, tangible. It was an awakening so to speak. Something was missing and I've found the key. I probably have felt better than at any other time of my life. More at peace with myself. My wife has noticed it too.

If this testimony is hard to believe, consider that Bill Borden was a searingly self-honest person, to a fault. He had talked as vividly when he had struggled with these issues. And he recognized that he would have to continue to work on this set of issues for a long time.

He explained that for him to say something it had to be "perfect." He was experimenting with being more direct about performance problems, and to his relief and surprise, he was finding that his fears about how people would react proved unwarranted. In fact, subordinates, including those he confronted, appreciated him more for his candor. His increased openness and directness was also showing up in his taking more stands and in being clearer about what he expected. Bill said,

> It takes courage. There would have been some fear in the past of saying, "Here are my expectations." Did I know 100 percent of the ramifications of what I was saying? It comes back to that perfection aspect that I've lived with all my life.

It could be said that Bill Borden's development comes down to learning to contribute more *himself*. Out of a lack of confidence, out of a fear of failure, out of fear that his assertions wouldn't be perfect, he had suppressed his own personal contribution. His boss had been telling him for some time that he wasn't working up to his full potential. Bill noted,

> I have been aware of not using all of my talent. I see that I have underestimated my contribution and what I can do. So there isn't a reason to hold back.

Holding back is the operative term for overly enabling executives. Bill was in the process of learning to overcome that tendency.

Bill's term for his reformed approach to leading was *assertive enabling*. Others saw evidence of the blend. A subordinate made the observation that "without compromising his values he's a tougher leader. And being tougher doesn't mean he is no longer a nice guy."

Bill demonstrated his increased potency by personally leading a significant organizational change. It was his idea, one that he had had for some time. But now he swung into action. He presented it to his boss and to the board and received a full endorsement. "I'm discovering support out there I didn't know I had," he said. Enabling executives like Bill Borden learn to empower themselves. They discover their own power.

The total development task for managers with a strong leaning in either direction is to place greater emphasis on the neglected side and to take away some emphasis from the preferred side. Dealing with the entire two-sided system—simultaneously taking one side out of the shadows and taking the

spotlight off of the other—allows the relative emphasis to shift. Gestalt theory defines development in terms of resolving polarities. The dominant polar quality ceases to thoroughly dominate the foreground and the other polar quality is no longer so obscured in the background. According to Erving Polster and Miriam Polster (1973, p. 62),

> The task in resolving the polarity is to aid each part to live to its fullest. . . . This reduces the chance that the one part will stay mired in its own impotence. . . . Instead, it is energized into making a vital statement of its own needs and wishes, asserting itself as a force which must be considered in a new union of forces.

To put it another way, managers can become, on the basic forceful-enabling leadership polarity, less one-dimensional and more multidimensional. Another word for one-dimensional is *rigid*. In becoming less one-dimensional, managers gain flexibility. They have more choice in how they respond to situations. They are no longer locked into one predictable set of responses. They learn to make more discriminating use of their favored attributes and they gain greater access to attributes that have been out of favor.

Phases in Actually Changing

There is no formula for changing, but managers who increase their versatility do tend to move through two phases. The first phase is a kind of conversion experience in which they see themselves in a new light. This is the reason for providing managers with extensive feedback. A conversion experience is the necessary precondition to internalized change, change that has a chance of being integrated into the person and of being sustained.

The second phase consists of putting the self-realization into practice through an interplay between two interrelated activities—trying out new behavior and managing one's beliefs and feelings. Trying out new behavior is an attempt to produce behavior that the individual found difficult to exhibit in the past. This means not only doing more of what he or she had done too little of but also doing less of what had been overdone.

Managing one's beliefs and feelings goes hand in hand with the effort to act differently. To change is to break old habits not just of acting but also of thinking and feeling. Managers must free themselves from inhibitions or compulsions. In the process of changing they will often say, "I catch myself." They gradually become aware of the fork in the road where they can take the

old direction or a new one. They learn to recognize the triggering emotion, usually fear in one form or another, including the physical cues such as a dry throat or a tense neck, that send them in the old direction (R. Henson, personal communication, June 1995). They become more objective about their fear. It is almost as if they can hold their fear in their hands like an object and thereby gain a measure of control over it. As part of becoming aware of the triggering feeling, managers may return to their past to identify the early lessons that still drive their behavior.

Conclusion

What is the value of versatility? What gain do managers achieve by increasing versatility on the forceful-enabling polarity?

As managers move in the direction of greater versatility, there are two clear breakpoints. The first is the shift from virtually no versatility to some. The second shift is from moderate versatility to a great deal. There is little question about the value of making the first shift. This is the transition emphasized in this report: from the extreme case to the not-so-extreme case—that is, from a basically either-or stance toward forceful and enabling leadership to a sufficiently both-and posture.

In the extreme case managers are virtually handicapped. They have a great deal of difficulty "turning" toward forceful leadership or toward enabling leadership. They have an aversion to one side or the other. They avert their eyes from that side and leave themselves open to being blindsided from that direction.

Because they experience the two approaches as polar opposites, one approach actually precludes the other. If I am one of these types, it is contradictory for me to be the other as well.

When managers in this extreme position become more versatile, they depolarize the relationship between the two approaches. They come to see some value in the other approach to leadership. They continue to very much favor one side over the other; they remain distinctly lopsided. But they no longer experience the two types as complete polar opposites. They come to recognize the potential for each side to complement the other.

Thus, a step beyond a polarized relationship between forceful and enabling leadership is to favor one side but no longer to the exclusion of the other. The manager places some value on the other side, and now either has some greater ability to perform those functions or values them enough to call

upon other people to perform them. Specialized leaders can be effective—for example in an office of the CEO—provided they take their place in a constellation of leaders who complement one another.

The other basic shift is from being still distinctly lopsided to having a fair amount of versatility. The increase in versatility stems from a growing appreciation for what the other side can do and from overcoming whatever hang-ups keep the manager from exhibiting that kind of behavior.

Someone approaching "ultimate" versatility is able to place close to equal weight on both sides so that, as the occasion requires, he or she can alternately be emphatically forceful or abundantly enabling. It may be that in its ultimate form the distinction between the two approaches at times melts away so that managers can, almost in a single act, incorporate both. The term Bill Borden came up with, *assertive enabling*, is suggestive of this incorporation of the two approaches.

Robert Kegan (1982) has conceptualized human development, starting with childhood, as a series of stages that alternate between an emphasis on assertiveness and an emphasis on relationships. He called an advanced stage of development the "interindividual," which emphasizes both. In this stage, the person is strong in his or her own right and at the same time has a well-developed capacity to enter into relationships with others.

Daniel Levinson (1978) advanced a similar idea in suggesting that the attachment-separateness polarity is ideally resolved when individuals, having achieved a strong, sound, secure sense of self as an independent being, are then in a position to come together with other people all the more successfully.

Ultimate versatility on the forceful-enabling polarity is, in my experience, relatively rare. The incidence of highly versatile managers, equally adept at being forceful and enabling, seems to be low. Given the likely limits on the development of managers, then a fallback position is for managers to staff around their limitations. A senior manager who knows him- or herself to be more of an enabling type and faces cutbacks and other wrenching change can recruit a forceful manager or two. As long as the senior team, among its various members, is up to the leadership job, then the top person can be effective. He or she need not personally possess the necessary versatility. I might add that managers are unlikely to adopt this staffing strategy unless they know their strengths and weaknesses and unless they place a value on the attributes they lack. Managers who polarize forceful and enabling are poor prospects for meeting these conditions.

Appendix

There are many lists of leadership attributes. Here are two, one from the academic world and one from the corporate world.

Warren Bennis (1982), based on his research and a long career as a student of leadership, defined five key traits of successful chief executives: *vision* of a desired future state; *communication and alignment* (communicating the vision to build support for it); *persistence, consistency, focus* so that the vision is actually realized even in the face of adversity; *empowering others* to tap into the energies and talents necessary to achieve the desired results; and *organizational learning* in the service of tracking progress and, if necessary, revamping the organization itself.

The following was developed internally by a company as a tool for evaluating individual managers. First is a list of things that an effective manager must do: believe in and live the corporate *values* (there is a list of five values); develop and communicate a rallying *vision*; be a *strategic* thinker; be a *risk*-taker; have a proven *track record*; be a catalyst for *change*; have earned the *trust* of the organization; be a *listener* and an *enabler;* develop good strong *subordinates* for succession; and be an *optimist* and have a sense of *humor*.

In addition to the "musts," this company defined a supplementary set of desirable characteristics, including: a variety of work experiences; an international orientation; financial expertise; understanding of and ability to deploy technology; ability to deal with ambiguity; skill at alliance management (for example, joint ventures); a balanced, healthy lifestyle; and active roles outside the company.

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Leaders need to be forceful—to assert themselves and their capabilities and to push others to perform. Leaders also need to be enabling—to tap into and bring out the capabilities of others. The problem is that many executives see forceful leadership and enabling leadership as mutually exclusive, or strongly prefer one or the other, and therefore lack the versatility to be truly effective. This publication explains how executives can overcome the emotional barriers to expanding their skill sets in one direction or the other.

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